

BY THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL

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Report To The Congress

OF THE UNITED STATES

Changes In Public Land Management Required To Achieve Congressional Expectations

Public land managers in the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior are having difficulty achieving congressional expectations of producing the natural resources the Nation needs--timber, grazing forage, minerals, energy, etc.--while protecting the environment and conserving sufficient resources for the future.

GAO recommends legislative and administrative changes which, together with agency actions already underway, should lead to

- realistic assessments of resource supplies and demands,
- resource production goals consistent with production capabilities and conservation and environmental restrictions,
- better resource inventories and forest and rangeland management plans,
- effective links between land management plans and annual budgets,
- stronger and more effective programs for regulating public land users and maintaining facilities and resources, and
- a proper balance between the agencies' land management responsibilities and capabilities.

This document is the executive summary of the GAO report. The scope and detailed results of the full work are contained in a separate report which includes an appendix with examples.

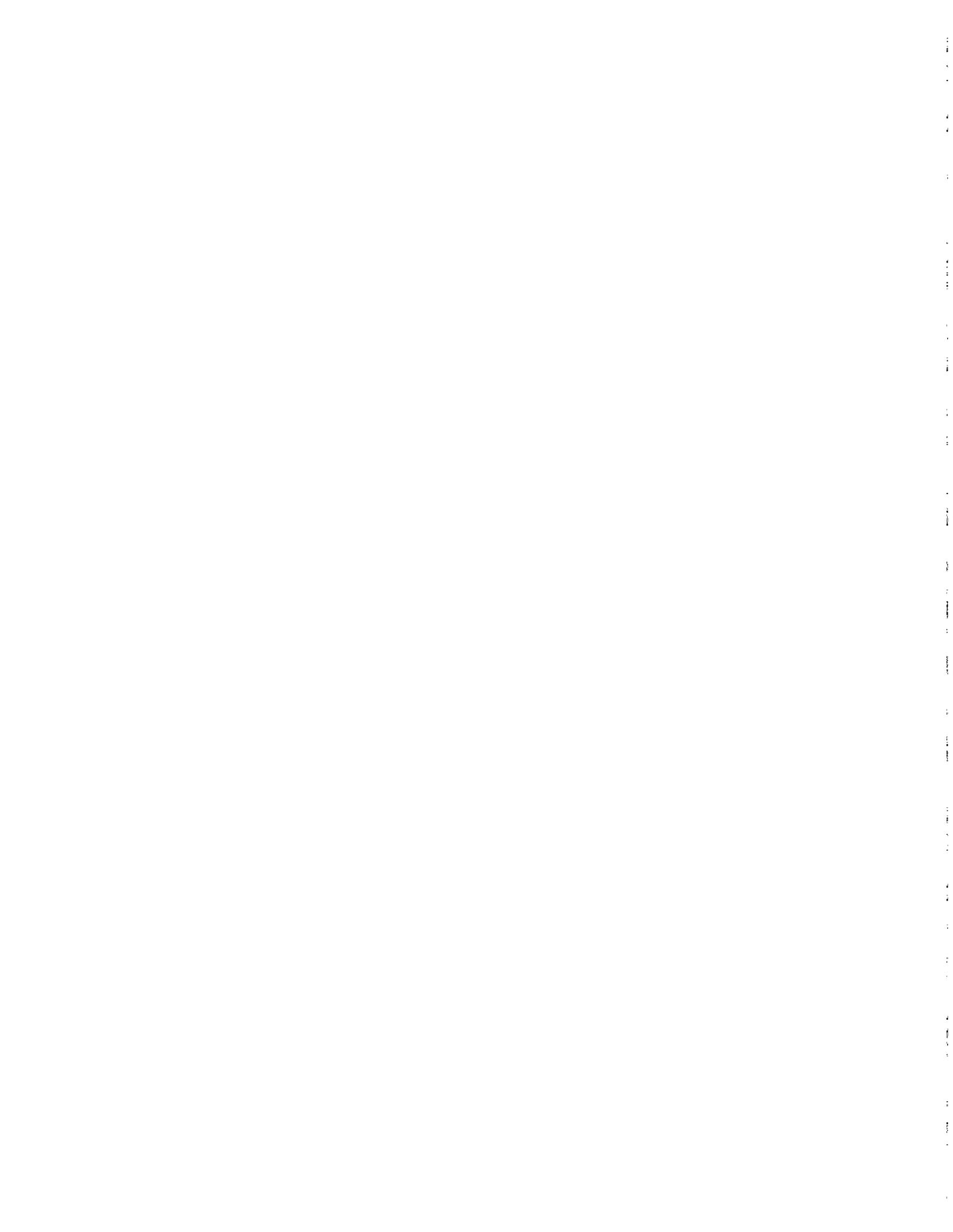


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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

CED-80-82A
JULY 16, 1980





COMPTROLLER GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20548

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To the President of the Senate and the
Speaker of the House of Representatives

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This executive summary discusses problems the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior are having in managing public lands to achieve the expectations of the Congress. It recommends a number of legislative and administrative changes which, together with agency actions already underway, should make the agencies better able to satisfy future natural resource needs while protecting the environment and conserving sufficient resources for the future.

This document is a summary of the GAO report. The full report contains the scope and detailed results of our work, an appendix with examples, the agencies' detailed comments, and our responses. (Instructions for obtaining the full report are on the inside front cover of this executive summary.)

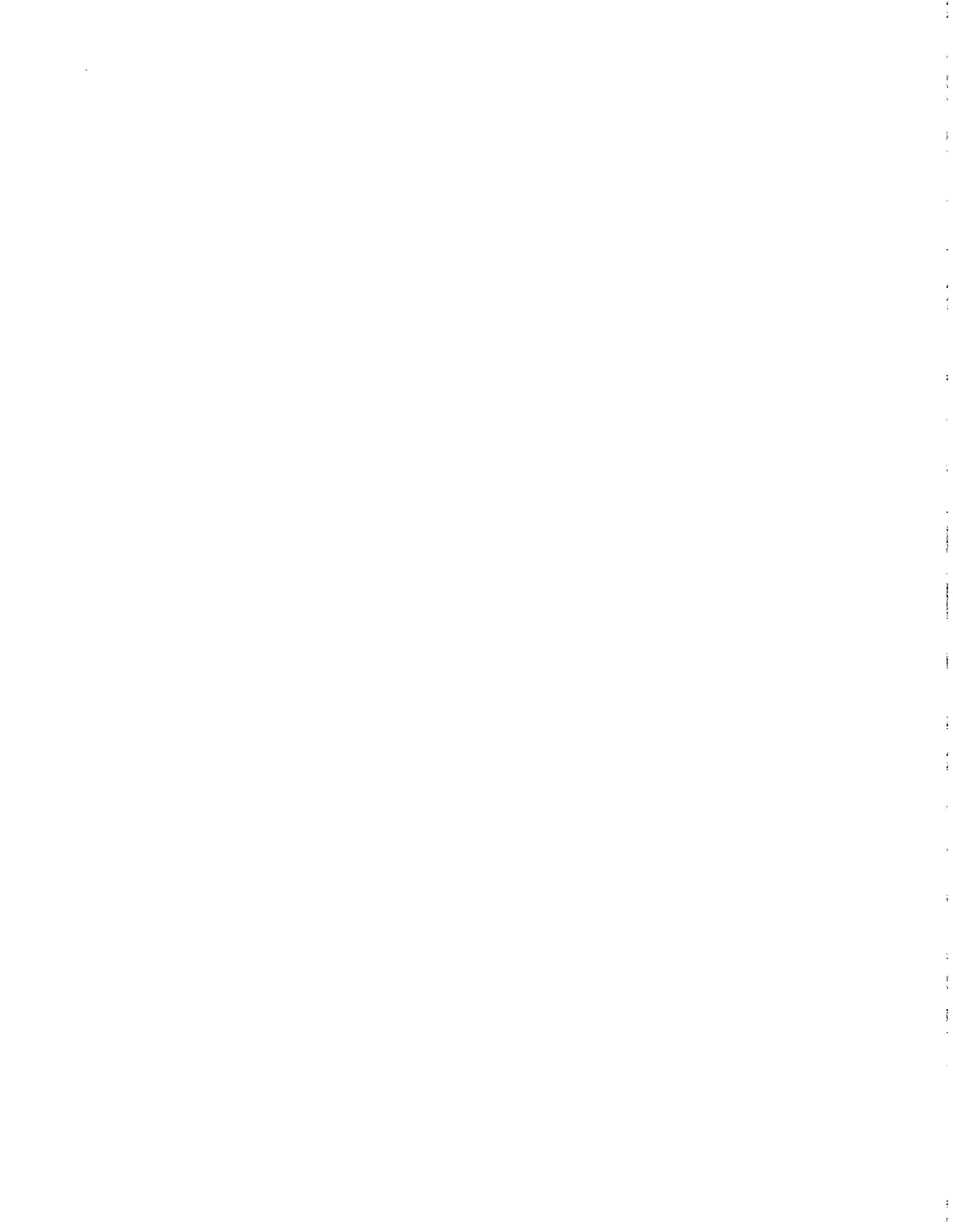
We evaluated the effectiveness and efficiency of public land management because of the significance of the lands and their resources and because of increased public and continued congressional interest.

We are sending copies of this report to the Director, Office of Management and Budget; the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior; the Director, Bureau of Land Management; and the Chief, Forest Service.

Milton J. Jordan

Acting Comptroller General
of the United States

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COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S
REPORT TO THE CONGRESS

CHANGES IN PUBLIC LAND
MANAGEMENT REQUIRED TO
ACHIEVE CONGRESSIONAL
EXPECTATIONS

D I G E S T

Interior's Bureau of Land Management does not have, nor is it legislatively required to have, long-range programs and quantified production goals for renewable resources such as timber, grazing forage, minerals, and energy. As a result, it has no realistic basis for determining the production levels necessary to meet its share of the Nation's needs.

Agriculture's Forest Service is required to assess the Nation's renewable resources, both public and private, and to develop a long-range program and goals for its lands.

GAO believes that the Bureau should set quantified, long-range production goals and accomplish other objectives of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act and that the process be legislatively required.

Further, production goals must account for limitations such as those resulting from wilderness studies, environmental protection laws and programs, wild and scenic river designations, and lawsuits and administrative appeals. Such events usually cannot be foreseen and reflected in long-range goals and therefore it is important for the agencies to set annual goals which reflect such events as they occur.

For example, between 1972 and 1979 over 50 million acres of Forest Service land and 3.6 billion board feet of timber could not be harvested until studies to determine their suitability for wilderness designation were completed. This timber, however, was presumed to be available when the Service calculated its long-range timber harvest goals. Rather than setting annual harvest levels which compensated for this limitation,

the Service tried to meet the original goals by cutting more timber than planned in areas not under study, resulting in adverse environmental impacts in many national forests.

LAND MANAGEMENT PLANS
SHOULD BE LINKED TO
ANNUAL BUDGETS

Meeting realistic resource production goals once they are established will require comprehensive forest and rangeland management plans. Neither the Bureau nor the Service have land management plans for sizable portions of their lands. Many existing plans are inadequate because they

--are based on incomplete or obsolete resource inventory data or

--do not identify specific actions required to meet production goals while achieving environmental protection objectives.

Both agencies, however, are in the process of preparing comprehensive land management plans but it will take them several years to complete and use them.

These plans should be directly linked to the agencies' annual budgets to help obtain the staff and funds necessary to put the plans into action.

REGULATORY AND MAINTENANCE
PROGRAMS MUST BE STRENGTHENED

Natural resources under Bureau and Service management have been damaged, stolen, and abused because of insufficient staffing and funding to protect them. Bureau employees lack authority to ticket persons damaging Federal resources--an authority Forest Service employees have had since 1905.

GAO previously recommended amendments to the 1872 Mining Law to make it more consistent with the overall land management and environmental protection principles the Congress has mandated for the Bureau and the Service. ^{1/} GAO reaffirms its previous recommendations and again urges the Congress to enact them.

BALANCE BETWEEN RESPONSIBILITIES
AND CAPABILITIES IS ESSENTIAL

Bureau and Service staff and funds have not kept pace with the unprecedented number of new responsibilities and specific tasks assigned to the agencies such as developing and implementing quality land management plans. The situation has been particularly acute in the Bureau, which has found it difficult to complete even its most pressing mandates adequately.

Balanced use and development of resources has been hampered by a continuing budgetary emphasis on certain resource management programs--range and minerals in the Bureau and timber in the Service. As a result, other resources such as fish and wildlife have not received the management attention they deserve. In some cases, management effectiveness and investments also have been jeopardized by yearly staff and fund fluctuations brought about by changing priorities.

A needless burden on Service staff and funds is the continued administration of small, scattered parcels of land left intermingled with large tracts of private land, primarily as a result of land grants to homesteaders and the patenting of mining claims. Many of these tracts are of little or no use to the Service but could be used by adjacent landowners. It would be less costly and more sensible to sell

^{1/}"Mining Law Reform and Balanced Resource Management," (EMD-78-93, Feb. 27, 1979). 

or, in some cases, give them away. Although the Service is not now authorized to do so, legislation which would help solve this problem has been introduced.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Secretary of Agriculture should direct the Forest Service to place greater emphasis on limitations, conflicts, interactions, and trade-offs among potential resource uses in future assessment and program updates.

The Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior should direct the Service and the Bureau to set yearly production goals during the annual programming and budgeting process which reflect unforeseen changes in production capabilities as they occur.

The Secretaries should also:

--Direct the Bureau and the Service to carefully monitor and evaluate management improvements which result from the Office of Management and Budget's new workyear personnel ceilings after they have been in effect for a reasonable period.

--Seek higher ceilings if, in their judgment, the new ceilings fail to provide the Bureau and the Service sufficient staff to adequately carryout their assigned land management responsibilities.

Further the Secretaries should take actions to improve access to Bureau lands and to strengthen staffing and funding support for Bureau and Service user regulatory and maintenance programs. (See p. 29.)

The Congress should, in consultation with the Bureau, amend the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to require a long-range renewable resource program development process for the Bureau. While it need not be identical to the Service's process, it should meet the major objectives of the Service's resources planning act and provide for long-range, quantified resource production goals.

The Congress should also:

- Revise the 1872 Mining Law in accordance with recommendations made in GAO's February 27, 1979, report. Among other things, the legislation should grant discretionary authority to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to either permit or prevent development of mineral deposits on public lands, establish the means for responsible and equitable exercise of this discretionary authority, and provide for Federal retention of title to the surface.
- Consider modifying section 303 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to authorize Bureau employees to ticket persons violating Federal resource protection laws, similar to the authority 16 U.S.C. 559 grants to Service employees.
- Enact legislation which authorizes the Forest Service to sell or, in some instances, give away small, scattered land holdings which are too costly or impractical to administer properly.

Further the Congress should:

- Review Bureau and Service staffing and funding levels.
- Provide for a more realistic balance between the agencies' responsibilities and capabilities by either reducing responsibilities or appropriating more funds.

APPRAISAL OF AGENCY COMMENTS

The Department of the Interior, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and Office of Inspector General commented on a draft of the full report.

The Department of the Interior stressed the need for flexibility to decide on the most appropriate long-range program planning process. It characterized certain aspects of

the process legislatively required for the Service as "pointless and needlessly expensive," and said the Bureau would assess the usefulness of the Service's procedures as it develops its own process in response to recent Presidential directives.

GAO believes the Bureau's process should be similar to the Service's, but not necessarily identical, and that it should be legislatively authorized to ensure that it satisfies the Congress' needs and objectives.

The Forest Service brought to GAO's attention a number of actions it had taken regarding production goals for the non-Federal sector and encouraging that sector's adherence to the 1974 resources planning act, as amended. GAO deleted from this report criticisms and proposals in this regard.

The Forest Service also said that unacceptable damages to renewable resources have not occurred because of production limitations GAO cited. The only case of actual damages GAO cited was that due to intensified timber harvests in roaded areas to compensate for restrictions in wilderness study areas.

The Office of Management and Budget said GAO's conclusions on Bureau and Service staffing and funding were supported only by complaints from agency field personnel. It suggested that these complaints stemmed from "bureaucratic desire for more" and that with better management the agencies could correct the shortcomings GAO cited within present resource levels.

GAO believes a gap exists between the agencies' responsibilities and capabilities which is too large to be eliminated by more efficient management alone. Also, GAO has no factual basis for doubting the motives of agency personnel.

The Office of Management and Budget also disagreed that the agencies are having problems meeting congressional expectations. It said that the annual appropriation process is the most definitive expression of congressional expectations because it considers both

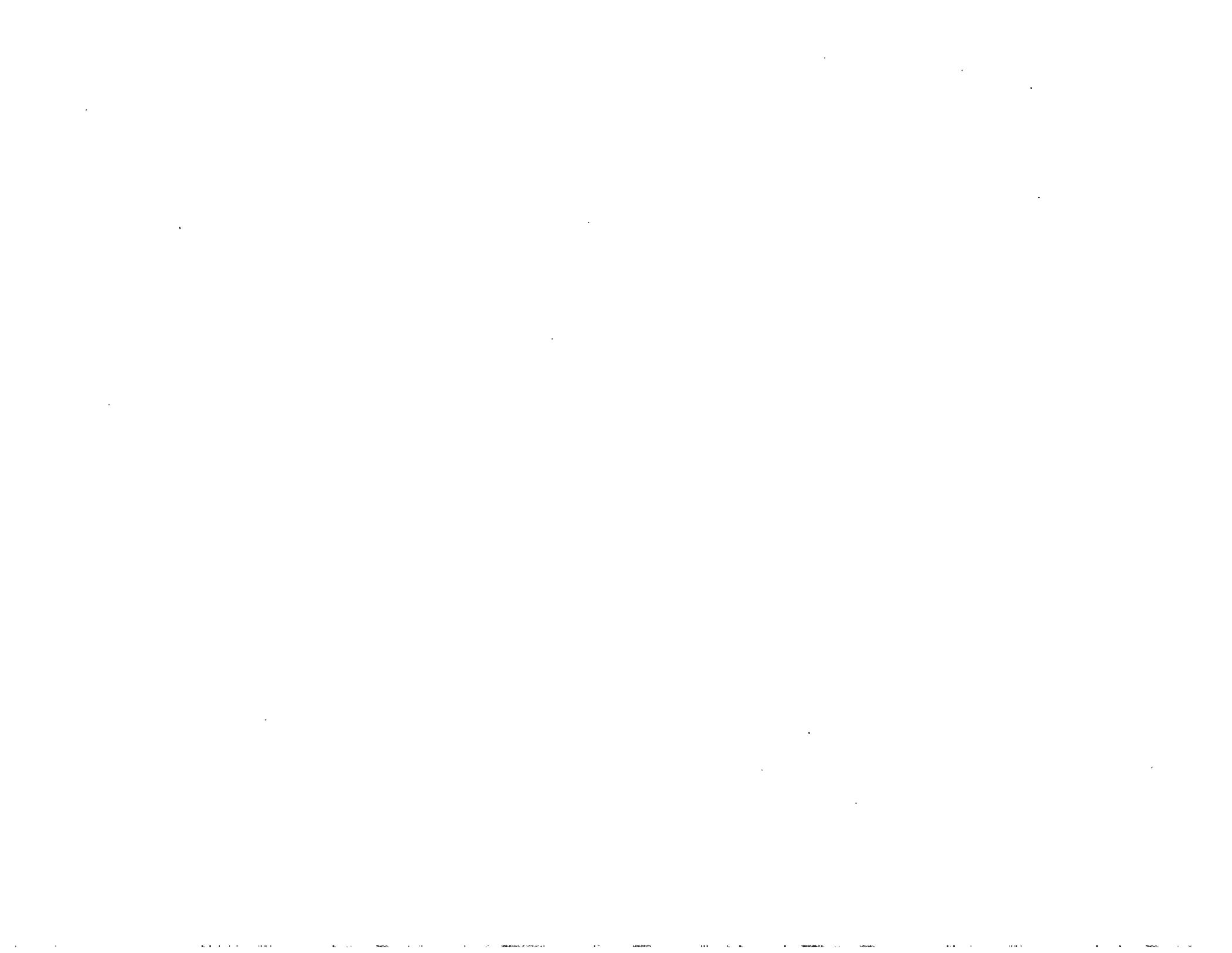
costs and benefits in light of the Nation's fiscal situation.

GAO maintains that the agencies' program authorizing acts are the most accurate expressions of the degree and quality of public land management the Congress expects. At the same time, GAO recognizes that this level of management may not be possible because of fiscal constraints. If the Nation cannot afford the level of management now required, then the Congress will need to decide what requirements are least important and delete them. Otherwise, these requirements tend to drain funds from, and dilute the effectiveness of, more important management efforts.



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<u>ABBREVIATIONS</u>	
GAO	General Accounting Office
OMB	Office of Management and Budget
ORV	off-road vehicle
RARE	Roadless Area Review and Evaluation



I. INTRODUCTION

Our public lands are vast in both size and importance. Totalling approximately 600 million acres, primarily in the Western States and Alaska, they comprise about 80 percent of the roughly 760 million acres in Federal ownership and about one-fourth of the 2.3 billion total acres in the United States. More importantly, however, they contain significant quantities of natural resources and values essential to our economy, growth, and quality of life: energy and nonenergy minerals; timber; grazing forage for livestock; outdoor recreation; wilderness; fish and wildlife habitat; water and watersheds; scenic beauty; and historic and cultural sites and artifacts.

Two Federal agencies share responsibility for managing the public lands. The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management administers about 417 million acres and the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service administers about 187 million acres.

Fundamental public land management policies and procedures have been prescribed by three comprehensive statutes enacted since 1974:

- The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974 (16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq.), which applies primarily to the Service.
- The National Forest Management Act of 1976, which amended and supplemented the Service's 1974 resources planning act.
- The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701), which applies primarily to the Bureau.

Through these acts the Congress has set a common and challenging goal for the Bureau and the Service to manage the public's lands and associated resource values in a manner which best meets the present and future needs of the American people. This requires striking a balance between three competing and usually conflicting basic objectives

- using and developing resources,
- protecting and conserving resources, and
- maintaining the quality of the environment.

It also requires ensuring appropriate balance and diversity among resource uses.

To accomplish these objectives, the acts require both agencies to plan for and manage their lands according to the multiple-use/sustained yield principle. Although this principle is not easily defined or understood, it basically means harmonious, coordinated management of all resource values on large areas of land and the best combination of diverse land uses, both developmental and protective. It must provide sufficient latitude to conform to changing needs and conditions and also consider the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources. It must ensure that the productivity of the land and the quality of the environment are not permanently impaired. It does not necessarily mean use of all resources or the combination of uses that gives the greatest unit output or economic return.

Meeting public land management objectives is innately complex and difficult. Use/development is usually not compatible with protection/conservation and often impairs environmental quality. For example, timber harvesting and extensive mining would not be compatible with preserving an area's wilderness characteristics. Achieving a balance among uses is difficult because using one resource often limits use, development, or protection of others. Intensive livestock grazing, for instance, can reduce forage and cover available for wildlife and adversely affect the land's watershed qualities by reducing vegetative cover.

Resolving such conflicts and determining the best possible combination of uses for discrete areas of land is the primary purpose of the comprehensive resource inventory and land management planning process which the acts require of both agencies. It is through this process that

- existing resources and potential uses are identified and quantified,
- the relative values of each are considered,
- conflicting uses are identified and mitigated to the extent possible, and
- decisions are made regarding the best and most diverse combination of uses possible.

The scope and results of our work are contained in a

separate report, "Changes in Public Land Management Required to Achieve Congressional Expectations" (CED-80-82). We interviewed Service and Bureau headquarters and field officials and OMB officials. Locations visited included seven national forests and five Bureau State offices. The report includes an appendix with examples and agency comments and our analysis. Instructions for obtaining the report are shown on the inside front cover of this executive summary.

II. MORE REALISTIC ASSESSMENTS AND GOALS ARE NEEDED

The first steps to ensuring that the Nation's renewable resource needs are met are (1) accurately assessing supplies and demands and (2) setting realistic long-term production goals. The Service was required by law 1/ to assess the Nation's renewable resource supplies and demands (both public and private) in 1975, and update the assessment in 1979 and every 10 years thereafter. Based on these assessments, it also must update every 5 years (beginning in 1979) a long-range program and production goals designed to meet its share of anticipated demands.

The President will transmit the first assessment and program update to the Congress in late June 1980. The Service believes the assessment and program are significantly better than those developed in 1975. The Bureau, however, has criticized the assessment and program for

- largely ignoring the multiple-use mandates specified in the Bureau's and the Service's legislative authorities,
- failing to discuss or quantify trade-offs among resource uses,
- understating use conflicts that exist on Federal lands, and
- omitting a cogent analysis of certain resources such as minerals and wilderness.

The Bureau characterized these as "serious defects" which make the documents "virtually useless in the management of public resources under current statutes."

The Bureau has not yet developed a long-range program or production goals like the Service. Although not required by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act, the President directed the Bureau in August 1979 to establish a program development process which has important parallels to the Service's process. The President also directed the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to coordinate efforts between

1/The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600-1614).

the Bureau and the Service in preparing the resources planning act assessment, which should serve as the base for each agency's program.

The Bureau, however, is concerned about the usefulness of certain aspects of the resources planning act program process, particularly the requirement to develop a multi-decade program budget. The Bureau said it will carefully review the Service's experience with the resources planning act process and will assess the usefulness to the Bureau of those specific procedures.

Although long-range production goals are essential guides for good land management, events often occur after they are established which limit production capabilities. Failure to set yearly production goals which accommodate such events as they occur can encourage agencies to employ poor land management practices in an attempt to meet long-range goals which are no longer realistic.

A case in point is the Service's failure to set annual timber harvest goals which accounted for severe restrictions on the amount of land available for timber harvesting because of wilderness studies. Between 1972 and 1979 over 50 million acres of Forest Service land and 3.6 billion board feet of timber could not be harvested until studies to determine their suitability for wilderness designation were completed. This timber, however, was presumed to be available when the Service calculated its long-range timber harvest goals. Rather than adjusting annual harvest levels to compensate for this limitation, the Service tried to meet the original goals by cutting more timber than planned in areas not under study. This resulted in adverse environmental impacts and threatened other resource values in many national forests.

Wilderness designations and studies have limited (and will continue to limit) production capabilities for resources other than timber on millions of Service and Bureau acres. The Wilderness Act of 1964 (which applied to the Service but not to the Bureau) established wilderness protection as a national policy and created the National Wilderness Preservation System to preserve an enduring wilderness resource for the American people. Areas in the system are to be preserved primarily in their natural state, with man's influence substantially unnoticeable. Commercial enterprises (such as timber harvesting), permanent and temporary roads, and all use of motorized equipment are prohibited in both designated areas and potential areas being studied for designation.

Wilderness studies

The Service conducted two Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE) studies to identify areas suitable for wilderness designation. RARE I (which encompassed 56 million acres) was begun in 1972, but was preempted before completion in 1977 by RARE II (which covered 62 million acres).

The Service made its RARE II recommendations to the President in January 1979. He revised the recommendations somewhat and forwarded them to the Congress for final approval in April 1979. The President recommended areas totaling about 15.6 million acres for wilderness designation, areas totaling about 10.5 million acres for further study, and areas totaling about 36 million acres for nonwilderness.

Although the Wilderness Act of 1964 did not apply to the Bureau, similar requirements were contained in section 603 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. The Bureau completed an initial inventory of its roadless areas and islands (174 million acres) in 1979 which determined that areas totaling 62 million acres merited further study. An intensive inventory is being conducted to determine which areas will be studied further and which areas will no longer be considered for potential designation. To free unsuitable areas for other uses as soon as possible, the Bureau's Director set an October 1980 deadline for completing the intensive inventory. As of April 1980, the Bureau had determined that 124 million acres would no longer be considered and that 11 million acres merited further study. As of that date, the Bureau had not made final decisions on the remaining 39 million acres.

The Congress must make the final decisions on Bureau and Service wilderness areas by legislatively designating each individual area. Until this is done, the Bureau must manage all 62 million of its study acres (both those it recommends as suitable and unsuitable for wilderness designation) so as to preserve their wilderness characteristics. This is to prevent activities that might preempt the Congress' prerogative to change the Bureau's recommendations.

The Service must do likewise on the 26 million acres the President recommended for wilderness designation and further study. Unlike the Bureau, the Service is technically free to develop the 36 million acres the President recommended as non-wilderness. According to the Service's Assistant Director for Land Management Planning, this does not mean all areas would be intensely developed. He said that orderly planning and use will proceed and that the Service will remain sensitive to public concerns in controversial areas. Service land managers we talked to, however, were reluctant to begin development in

the nonwilderness areas until final congressional actions are taken.

There are no legislative deadlines for congressional action and no reliable estimates of how long this action might take. Until the Congress acts, however, activities such as mineral development, timber harvesting, livestock grazing, and recreation will be limited severely on millions of Bureau and Service acres. Such limitations also undoubtedly will be made permanent on millions of acres once the Congress makes its final designations.

Other production limitations

Other events, while important to public land conservation and environmental protection objectives, have presented (and will likely continue to present) real limitations on resource production capability. These limitations also must be recognized in annual production goals. These limitations include:

- Designations and studies, pursuant to the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968, to preserve selected rivers in their free-flowing condition and to protect their recreational, geological, historical, cultural, and natural qualities. Use and development of other resources are limited to varying degrees in the visual corridors of all or parts of 16 designated rivers (totaling about 1,250 miles) which the Bureau and/or the Service administer. Together the agencies administer 44 other rivers under study for possible designation.
- Lengthy lawsuits challenging the agencies' compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act which delay resource development projects or planned management actions. One such suit, settled in 1975, virtually halted further resource development in the Bureau's livestock grazing program until the Bureau completes 145 site-specific environmental impact statements covering 173 million acres. These statements must be completed according to a yearly schedule by 1989. The Bureau cannot implement any new grazing management plans or improvement projects in a particular area until it has completed the appropriate environmental statement. Development of the Bureau's timber and coal resources also has been delayed less severely by two similar environmental lawsuits. On Service lands, environmental suits also have held up many specific resource development actions such as timber sales. All timber sales in two units (110,000 acres) of the Six Rivers National Forest in California, for

example, have been blocked by litigation since 1974 and 1976, respectively.

--Administrative appeals of Bureau and Service land management decisions. Any interested party may appeal any such decision, and the agencies must postpone implementing the decision until the appeal is resolved, generally an involved and time-consuming process. An appeal of a Bureau timber sale in Oregon, for example, took more than 2 years to resolve and delayed the sale even longer. A 1976 Department of the Interior audit reported that delays of this length are not uncommon.

Intermingled land ownership patterns and uncertain access also have limited Bureau and Service resource production capability. Since in many cases little can be done to alleviate these limitations, they too must be accounted for when setting annual production goals.

Intermingled lands (large blocks of private lands adjacent to or in the midst of public lands) have developed from past public land disposal policies such as grants or sales to States, railroads, and homesteaders. Although there can be offsetting benefits, the management practices of private owners, particularly commercial resource developers, in some cases have forced the Service and the Bureau to cut back on planned development. To illustrate, the Service had to cancel a 5-million board feet timber sale in the Fremont National Forest so as not to further aggravate visual, hydrologic, erosive, and vegetative damage created by the rapid clear-cutting of 4,200 intermingled private acres. In such situations, the Bureau and the Service must rely on State agencies or the private owners' voluntary cooperation. In States without strong forestry acts and supportive officials, the agencies must modify their development plans or risk compromising their resource and environmental protection objectives.

Uncertain access to public lands--a problem closely related to intermingled land ownership patterns--has limited production of energy and nonenergy minerals, hampered recreational use, and impaired ability to meet production goals. Factors which have limited access include:

--The Bureau's failure to guarantee access to prospective developers of resources other than timber. The Bureau has a policy to guarantee access to timber offered for sale by acquiring road easements and right-of-way agreements where access across private land is needed. It has no similar policy for other

resources. The Bureau estimated it needs 8,800 more easements for proper access, but that it would take 150 years to obtain them at current funding levels.

--Rural counties abandoning roads because of limited funds. In many areas county roads provide the only link between public lands and Federal or State highways, and their loss can be serious. The abandonment of one county road in Colorado, for example, resulted in lost access to 8,500 acres of marketable timber and 30,000 acres of public subsurface mineral holdings. The Service said similar access problems exist with historical public access routes not in the county road system.

--Private landowners who block access to public lands. A cooperative effort on this problem in Colorado found numerous instances where very small parcels of private land or road (some only 100 yards long) blocked access to thousands of public acres. This problem has become more serious in recent years because private owners have become more reluctant to grant access. One private owner went so far as to charge hunters \$500 to cross his land to reach a national forest, and he claimed that, due to the location of his land, the national forest was reserved for his personal use.

III. THE KEY TO EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT--LINKING RESOURCE USE GOALS, PLANS, AND BUDGETS

To manage public lands and resources effectively, the Bureau and the Service also must

--develop and implement good forest and rangeland management plans and annual programs reflecting field-level funding needs and priorities necessary to achieve short-term goals and

--incorporate the land management plans and annual programs into the budgetary process for consideration and funding by the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior, the Office of Management and Budget, and the Congress.

Both the Bureau and the Service are required by law to develop quality land management plans based on complete and accurate resource inventory data. During recent years, the agencies have been working to develop better resource inventory data, land management plans, and planning procedures. Making these improvements is a long, difficult task, and more needs to be done. Until these improvements are completed, management of Bureau and Service lands will continue to be guided by substandard plans or by the intuition and best guesses of land managers.

Many of the deficiencies plaguing the agencies' land management plans are the same as those on which we reported in 1977 1/ and 1978. 2/ Most importantly, both agencies still lack comprehensive management plans for sizeable portions of their lands. Many of the plans which do exist are inadequate for management purposes because they are based on incomplete natural resource inventories, are too general, or lack specific decisions on how resources should be used. These deficiencies result in plans that are of little value in resolving conflicts between uses and allocating land and resources to the best combination of uses. They also increase the potential for poor decisionmaking which is difficult or impossible to reverse.

1/Letter report to the Acting Director, Bureau of Land Management, October 6, 1977.

2/Report to the Secretary of Agriculture, "The National Forests--Better Planning Needed to Improve Resource Management," (CED-78-133, July 12, 1978).

Since these reports, the Bureau and the Service have developed improved planning procedures. The Bureau published final regulations containing its new procedures on August 7, 1979. The Service published its final regulations on September 17, 1979--about 11 months after the October 22, 1978, deadline set by the National Forest Management Act.

Finalizing these improved planning procedures has taken time, but it will take even longer to develop and implement plans using them. The Service's Planning Director anticipates that new plans for 1,005 planning units will be completed by 1984, but he concedes some probably will not be ready until 1985--the target date set by the National Forest Management Act. Completion of the Bureau's plans will almost certainly take longer. The Bureau estimates 158 plans will be completed by the end of fiscal year 1986--some partially done under the new procedures, others totally. That would leave 89 units for which it will have to subsequently prepare completely new or substantially revised plans. No estimates were available on when this task would be completed.

Once necessary management actions are identified, they must be carried out. This requires translating planned actions into staffing and funding requirements and putting them through the agencies' annual programming and budgeting processes. Since even the best plans are useless unless implemented properly, strong links between the agencies' respective land management plans and annual programs and budgets are crucial.

Our 1977 and 1978 reports on Bureau and Service land management planning systems (see p. 10) also emphasized the need for effective links between plans and annual budgets. Both agencies have efforts underway to establish these links, but it will be several years before these efforts are completed.

The Service has addressed the necessary links in its newly issued land management planning regulations (see above). These regulations require regional and forest officials to assure that

- their annual program proposals and projects comply with their land management plans and
- budget allocations meet their assigned program objectives and are consistent with their land management plans.

A new Service programing and budgeting process and a new computer system, directly linking the Service's annual budget to its land management plans and long-range program (see p. 4), are scheduled to be fully implemented by the end of 1982. Assuming this schedule is met, the Service's fiscal year 1984 program and budget would be the first to be completely developed under the new system.

The Bureau's current annual programing and budgeting process theoretically provides an informal link to land management plans, but in practice it is admittedly weak. A major problem is that plans do not exist for many land areas and existing plans for other areas are inadequate and/or outdated. In such cases, a budget official said the Bureau has to rely on "best educated guesses."

The Bureau also designed a computerized system to directly link its annual programs and budgets to its multiple-use management plans, but its implementation is still years away. The system has been shelved temporarily while the Bureau tries to resolve technical problems. The basic problem is that sufficient data and information needed to implement the system does not exist. Because the Bureau believes a linking system is essential, it is working to solve these problems as it develops a new overall management information system. Within 5 to 7 years the Bureau hopes to have the overall information system to a point where a linking system can be implemented.

IV. REGULATING USERS AND MAINTAINING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES--GREATER ATTENTION NEEDED

Natural resources entrusted to the Bureau and the Service have been needlessly damaged, stolen, and abused because of insufficient staffing and funding for programs designed to protect them. User regulatory programs that have been particularly hard-hit are special-use permits, law enforcement, and off-road vehicles. The agencies' programs for maintaining resource improvement projects have similarly suffered from insufficient funding. Problems also exist with their programs for controlling mining damage.

The Service's special-use permit program

Special-use permits are issued when requests are made for long-term or developmental use of Service land for specific purposes such as ski area development and operation. These permits normally include requirements necessary to protect public lands and resources from unnecessary damage. The Service, however, has been unable to monitor compliance with permit requirements because funding for special-use programs has been low. Consequently, unregulated users have damaged or defaced Service land and resources by (1) illegally bulldozing land to construct water pipelines, (2) dumping garbage, (3) building without permission, and (4) constructing roads in a manner that caused soil erosion.

Bureau and Service law enforcement programs

Although established by the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, the Bureau's law enforcement program is not yet in full gear. Presently, the Bureau has 20 special agents who are responsible for investigating natural resource crimes and for managing contracts and cooperative agreements with local law enforcement officials. These special agents have been given no staff. Furthermore, funding for law enforcement contracts and cooperative agreements is minimal. The Colorado office, for example, received only \$13,000 for cooperative law enforcement in fiscal year 1979. With this amount it could only draw up four agreements, even though it had identified at least 21 areas where increased law enforcement was needed.

Bureau State law enforcement officers do not know how many damaging violations actually occur, but believe they are numerous. The Colorado law enforcement officer and Branch Chief also told us that many minor violations, such as trespassing or unauthorized vehicle use, now go unenforced

because Bureau employees lack authority to ticket violators like that granted to Service employees in 1905. ^{1/} Because most Service field employees are land and resource managers, who do not view law enforcement as part of their jobs, however, Region 6 Service officials (including the regional Law Enforcement Director) believe that a large but undetermined number of violations also go unenforced on Service lands.

Off-road vehicle regulation programs

Both the Bureau and the Service have issued regulations designating areas as open, closed, or restricted for off-road vehicle (ORV) use. A 1979 report by the Council on Environmental Quality entitled, "Off-Road Vehicles on Public Lands" found, however, that funding and staffing constraints had hampered enforcement of the regulations. According to the report, the lack of agency "presence in the field" is the chronic problem, particularly in the Bureau.

The council's report also documented numerous damaging effects of ORV use similar to those we observed during our review. Based on our observations, we concur with the council's conclusions that

--to announce restrictions that are unenforceable under current personnel and funding conditions merely gives the illusion of control and

--the agencies should adapt their regulations to fit their enforcement capabilities if they cannot secure additional resources.

Low priority on maintenance programs

Neither the Bureau nor the Service have been provided sufficient funds to maintain existing structures and facilities or to carry out maintenance programs needed to improve resources. High priority maintenance projects remain only partially complete due to constantly shifting priorities and funding cutbacks. Land managers have found that maintenance programs cannot be planned because limited funding has forced them to operate reactively and do only the most critical projects. A major danger of operating in this reactive mode is that existing facilities, structures, and resources continue to deteriorate and eventually will require more costly major repairs or replacement. The Service stated that the value of routine maintenance is recognized only

^{1/}The Act of March 3, 1905 (16 U.S.C. 559).

when danger to health and safety or disruption of services is imminent. It predicted crisis management will continue without full funding.

Lacking adequate maintenance funding, both the Bureau and the Service have experienced numerous instances of damaged resources and facilities, such as range improvement and recreation facilities, roads and trails, and historic sites. For example, because of low funding levels:

- The Bureau can maintain only 100 of its 3,000 range improvement reservoirs in Wyoming. Pipelines carrying water to these reservoirs also critically need maintenance which would cost three times more than what is currently available. Delaying this maintenance increases the risk of ruptures and leaks which would cause serious erosion and waste precious water.
- The Lolo National Forest had to reduce its trail system to 1,900 miles, even though about 2,400 miles are needed to fulfill current demands.
- The Bureau can repair only 1,000 of its 7,000-mile road system in Wyoming, even though about 2,000 miles are in need. Inadequate maintenance already has caused severe soil erosion problems and unsafe road conditions.

Lack of authority to control mining damage

In a February 1979 report 1/ to the Congress, we recommended a series of revisions to the 1872 Mining Law which would satisfy the objectives of mineral development, fair market value return, protection of the environment, multiple-uses of public lands, and continued opportunities for the Nation's small miners. Among other things, we recommended that the revised legislation:

- Grant discretionary authority to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to either permit or prevent the development of mineral deposits on public lands. Development would be permitted after satisfactory demonstration that (1) a valuable mineral deposit had been discovered and (2) the the deposit could reasonably be expected to be mined within well-defined and acceptable environmental parameters and within a reasonable time frame.

1/"Mining Law Reform and Balanced Resource Management," (EMD-78-93, Feb. 27, 1979).

Claimants denied the right to mine should be compensated for exploration costs and receive priority consideration for future development.

- Establish the means for responsible use of the Secretarial discretionary authority, including court review of decisions to preclude mining activity.
- Provide for Federal retention of title to the surface (but not the mineral deposit) and encourage other uses (range, recreation, watershed, etc.) either simultaneously or at the termination of mining and reclamation activities.

These legislative revisions have not been made, but even if they are the Bureau and Service must still successfully integrate the mineral supply objectives of the Mining Law into their overall land management and planning processes. Striking an appropriate balance between mineral development, other public land uses, environmental protection, and resources preservation will undoubtedly be a tremendously complex and painstaking task. We are continuing to study the complex issue of assuring that Federal lands make the appropriate contribution to both mineral and non-mineral needs when the two are in conflict. In the future we plan to review more fully the nature of the conflicts, possible compromises, and Interior's progress in achieving an appropriate balance between mineral development and other public land and resource management objectives.

Despite shortcomings in the 1872 Mining Law, the Service provided some degree of environmental control over mining by issuing regulations on September 1, 1974 (36 CFR 252). These regulations require Service approval of a written operating plan for any operation on which significant resource disturbance (such as road and trail construction and tree clearing) is likely.

The Bureau proposed similar regulations in December 1976, but the regulations have yet to be finalized and put into effect. The Bureau told us in February 1980 that issuance of final regulations had been delayed because of the large volume of public comments received (over 7,000) and the resolution of internal policy questions. The Bureau re-proposed the regulations on March 3, 1980, but could not estimate when final regulations would be issued.

V. LAND MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES AND CAPABILITIES SHOULD BE BALANCED

Limited staff and funds have hampered effective land management by the Bureau and the Service. Although staff and funds have increased over recent years, they have not kept pace with the unprecedented number of new responsibilities and specific tasks assigned to the agencies by legislation, Executive orders, and court decisions. The situation has been particularly acute in the Bureau which has found it difficult to complete even the most pressing mandates adequately. Neither agency has been able to properly carry out activities essential to proper land management, such as developing and implementing quality land management plans and establishing public land boundaries.

Since 1970 the Bureau's responsibilities for major resource management programs have increased rapidly and changed the agency's mission to an unprecedented degree. During this period there have been 27 legislative actions, 5 Executive orders, and 3 court decisions for which the Bureau is either solely or primarily responsible. These, as well as certain administrative policy decisions, have mandated that the Bureau complete a number of varied and specific tasks--many within tight deadlines.

The Service's major responsibilities during this period have been somewhat less but include (1) developing comprehensive resource inventories and land management plans (see pp. 10-11) and (2) periodically assessing national renewable resource supplies and demands and formulating a nationwide Service program to meet anticipated demands (see p. 4). The Service also has been involved in an intensive effort to identify wilderness areas and prepare a related programmatic environmental impact statement (see pp. 6-7).

Staff and funds actually committed to managing lands and resources have increased significantly in both the Bureau and the Service since most of these mandates were imposed. Between fiscal years 1974 and 1979, Bureau funding increased about 143 percent (from \$76 to \$185 million) while staff years increased about 78 percent (from 3,977 to 7,081). Service funding increased about 73 percent during this period (from \$395 to \$683 million) and staff years about 35 percent (from 16,714 to 22,515). Despite the proportionately larger increases in the Bureau, the Service has received roughly 10 times more staff and funds per acre than the Bureau. (In fiscal year 1978, Service funding was \$3.46 per acre and Bureau funding was \$0.39 per acre. During that year the Service committed 120 staff years per million acres and the

Bureau about 15. The Service believes these differences are partially due to differences in the character of the agencies' lands and the level of management intensity required to meet expected resource production levels.)

Despite these increases, the Bureau has found it difficult to comply with even its highest priority mandates. During recent years its highest priority for available staff and funds has been the inventory and planning necessary to meet environmental impact statement and wilderness inventory deadlines. Because of these priorities, the Bureau has been unable to accomplish other important land management activities, such as implementing allotment (grazing) management plans in areas where environmental statements have been completed (see p. 7), timely completion of the wilderness inventories in Colorado and coal inventories in Montana, and proper recordation of mining claims in Montana.

Staff and funds in the Service generally have been sufficient to maintain the status quo, but they have not permitted desired development and enhancement activities. For example, available recreation funds at the Lolo National Forest in Montana permitted basic operation and clean up of campgrounds, but not needed development projects (such as marking snowmobile and ski trails, constructing trails to mountain lakes, and designating trails for the National Recreation Trails System). The White River National Forest in Colorado did not have enough qualified staff to monitor planned development of ski areas and thus may have to limit development efforts.

At the heart of the agencies' staffing problems are personnel ceilings the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) has imposed. These ceilings limit the number of permanent and other-than-permanent (temporary, part-time, etc.) employees Federal executive agencies can have onboard at the end of each fiscal year. A 1976 report by the House Appropriations Committee's Surveys and Investigations staff ^{1/} found that these limits had forced several agencies, including the Bureau and the Service, to play the "ceiling

^{1/}"A report to the Committee on Appropriations, U.S. House of Representatives, on the Impact of Employment Ceilings On Operations of the National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service and Indian Health Service," January 1976.

game"--a practice which not only circumvented their purpose (limiting employment), but also impaired efficiency through wasteful turnover, retraining, and watering down staff quality.

Our findings in this review reinforce our 1977 report to the Congress entitled, "Personnel Ceilings--A Barrier To Effective Manpower Management" (FPCD-76-88, June 2, 1977). We concluded that:

- Although employment ceilings may be a tool to assure that concerns about the total number of Federal employees are met, ceilings are at best an inferior substitute for effective management.
- The basic framework for a practical and effective alternative to yearend personnel ceilings already exists and is in operation in the budget process. What is lacking is confidence in the soundness of agencies' estimates of staffing needs and confidence in the ability and reliability of agency managers to adhere to their estimates.
- With direction and guidance from OMB, full documentation from the agencies, and normal monitoring of agency activities during the year by budget examiners and congressional committees, this alternative to yearend personnel ceilings would respond to the basic concern of the President and the Congress, that is, that agencies manage and use needed staff resources of all kinds as effectively, efficiently, and economically as possible.

In September 1977, however, the President directed executive branch agencies to expand employment opportunities for part-time permanent workers, and directed OMB and the Office of Personnel Management to conduct an experiment with full-time equivalent (workyear) ceilings in a few agencies. Beginning with fiscal year 1979, five agencies (excluding the Bureau and Service) were assigned workyear ceilings and began to measure and report on their employment in terms of hours worked.

One of the experiment's objectives was to determine if workyear controls could improve personnel management, overcome difficulties under the present end-of-year ceiling system and, at the same time, not add significantly to the Federal work force. According to OMB, the preliminary results have been sufficiently encouraging to expand the test group to include five cabinet-level agencies in fiscal year

1981 and to implement the new controls throughout the executive branch beginning in fiscal year 1982.

There also have been two laws passed since our 1977 report which support the concept of employment ceilings. Section 311 of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, with certain exceptions, limited the number of civilian employees in the executive branch (including part-time and intermittent workers) at the end of fiscal years 1979, 1980, and 1981 to the number of such employees at the end of fiscal year 1977 (September 30, 1977). Also, the Federal Employees Part-Time Career Employment Act of 1978 (Public Law 95-437) requires that part-time career employees be controlled on a fractional basis beginning in fiscal year 1981. The objective of this requirement is to increase the number of part-time career employees in the Federal Government.

In February 1980 we met with OMB to update their views on personnel ceilings. The Chief of the Resources System Branch provided us with the following OMB positions:

- OMB opposes any discontinuance of personnel ceilings because of the new legislative and Presidential directives discussed above.
- It is unrealistic to expect executive agencies to do everything they are legislatively authorized to do. The purpose of personnel ceilings is to force agencies to limit their efforts to a realistic level.
- If an agency cannot do an adequate job because of its ceiling, it should formally request an increase-- something OMB says agencies almost never do.
- The new workyear ceilings should (1) alleviate many of the management problems attributed to the current end-of-year system, (2) permit agencies to hire more permanent part-time employees, and (3) permit more flexible and effective use of nonpermanent employees.

Defining the legal boundaries of Federal lands is an important responsibility of the Bureau which has been particularly hard-hit by staffing and funding limitations. Because many boundaries between public and private lands have not been identified, instances of trespass on Bureau and Service lands occur frequently. Resolving these situations adds to the agencies' administrative burden and places additional strain on already scant staff and funds.

The Bureau is the only Federal agency authorized to conduct land surveys and establish on-the-ground corners and monuments necessary to define the legal boundaries of most Federal lands. Because the Bureau has been unable to keep pace with the demand for boundary definitions, however, a mammoth backlog now exists. The Bureau estimates that despite recent funding increases it will take 400 years to complete needed land surveys at current funding levels.

Much of the backlog consists of lands which the Bureau has never surveyed--about 400 million of the 760 million Federal acres, including about 91 million acres of public land in the lower 48 States. It also estimates that an additional 50 million acres need to be resurveyed because the original surveys (some dating back over 100 years) were fraudulently or poorly done. Also, many original corners and monuments have been destroyed or obliterated. The Service estimates that about 272,500 miles of boundary line locations and about 1.3 million marked corners are needed on its lands alone. According to the Service, only about 11 percent of its boundaries are defined and marked well enough for effective and efficient management.

Until fiscal year 1980, the Service transferred funds and personnel positions to the Bureau to help reduce the backlog of boundary definitions on Service lands. According to the cognizant group leader, the backlog continued to pose a serious threat to the Service's land management effectiveness. He said the Service has had the capability to respond to the backlog, as well as new requirements which are expected to be greater, but that it has not had the authority to conduct the necessary land surveys.

On November 8, 1979, actions were initiated to provide the Service with the needed authority. At the urging of the House Committee on Appropriations, the Secretary of the Interior decided to administratively delegate his statutory survey authority to the Service. The Bureau and the Service have developed an agreement for the transfer of authority which must be approved by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior.

Besides overall staff and funding limitations, balanced use and development of Bureau and Service resources has been hampered by their budgetary emphasis on certain resource management programs--range and minerals in the Bureau and timber in the Service. As a result, other resources have not been used or developed to their potential. In some cases, management effectiveness and investments also have been jeopardized

by yearly staff and fund fluctuations brought about by changing priorities.

A needless burden on Service staff and funds is the continued administration of small, widely-scattered parcels of land left intermingled with large tracts of private land, primarily as a result of land grants to homesteaders and the patenting of mining claims. For example, the Service has retained a maze of such tracts in the town of Breckenridge, Colorado, located in the White River National Forest. Many of these are triangular plots, mostly 20 to 100 feet wide. One tract, only 5 feet wide, contains an intersection in the middle of Breckenridge which the town uses under a Service special-use permit.

Although small, such tracts require a certain level of administration. Their boundaries must be established, and the Service must monitor them to prevent trespass and abuse. When trespass violations are discovered, the Service also must often issue and enforce special-use permits, as in the Breckenridge example.

The Service believes it would be more practical to dispose of many of these tracts, but it is not authorized to sell or give them away. Therefore, it must either retain and try to administer them or dispose of them through land exchanges with willing private owners. If the Service were able to sell or give away such tracts,

- the backlog in boundary location work would be reduced;

- the number of occupancy trespasses would be reduced; and

- private owners would obtain tracts of land that are useful to them, but useless to the Service.

Legislation has been introduced to deal with this problem. The proposed Small Tracts Act (H.R. 6257), if passed, would authorize the Service to sell small tracts of specified sizes under certain conditions. The Service believes the bill would provide sufficient authority to dispose of small, scattered, uneconomical land parcels.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

Ensuring that the Nation's needs for renewable resources are met requires, among other things, a comprehensive process of assessing supplies and demands and setting realistic long-range production goals which satisfy demands to the extent possible. The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended, requires that such a process be applied by the Service. A similar process is not legislatively required for the Bureau but has been required recently by Presidential directives.

The Bureau is reluctant to adopt certain features of the program planning process required of the Service. It believes certain of those requirements, particularly multi-decade budgeting, may not be cost effective or useful for the Bureau.

We believe the basic objective of the planning act program process--ensuring that future renewable resource needs are met to the extent possible--is essential to proper public land management. Accomplishing this objective requires quantified, long-range production goals based on projected needs. These goals must be projected far enough into the future to allow sufficient time for planning and implementing management actions which may be necessary to increase production levels without compromising resource conservation and environmental protection objectives. The process should also provide the Congress with a credible basis for determining future public land funding needs; assessing the costs, benefits, and impacts of various management levels; evaluating annual agency budget requests; and evaluating the effectiveness of agency land management efforts.

We have no objection to a modified program process for the Bureau as long as it accomplishes these essential objectives. To ensure that the Bureau's long-range program process preserves these vital objectives and meets congressional needs, we believe it should be reviewed by the Congress and set forth in legislation.

Although an improvement over previous efforts, the Service's recently updated renewable resource assessment and program do not adequately address or quantify conflicts, interactions, and trade-offs among potential resource uses which are an integral part of public land management. Because of these deficiencies, the documents are of limited value to the Service and the Bureau in assessing resource needs and managing public resources in accordance with current multiple-use statutes.

Although realistic, long-range production goals are essential as guides for proper land management planning, events often occur after their establishment which limit production capabilities. Some of these events--such as wilderness or wild and scenic river studies or designations, lawsuits, and administrative appeals--are necessary for achieving public land conservation and environmental protection objectives or for protecting individuals' rights. Other problems limit production capability, but, in many cases, little can be done to alleviate them--those resulting from intermingled land ownership patterns and those which limit access to public lands and resources.

Since such events and problems cannot possibly be predicted and reflected in long-range goals, it is imperative that the Bureau and the Service set yearly production goals through their annual programs and budgets which accommodate such production-limiting events as they occur. Unless this is done, agencies may be encouraged to use poor management practices in an attempt to meet long-range goals which are no longer realistic.

The Bureau and the Service have recently finalized new, more comprehensive land management planning and resource inventorying procedures. If the procedures are followed, they should result in more specific plans based on more complete inventory data--improvements we have advocated for several years. The procedures' overall adequacy cannot be determined with certainty until new plans using them are developed and implemented--a process which will take several years to complete. The new procedures are a step in the right direction and should be tested through application.

Proper implementation of the agencies' new land management plans will likely depend on the success of their efforts to develop a means of effectively linking the plans to their annual programs and budgets. Since even the best plans are useless unless they are carried out properly, strong links are crucial to obtaining the staff and funds necessary to transform the plans into actions and thus are essential to the success of the entire integrated land management process required for the Service and needed for the Bureau. It is too early to predict whether the agencies' efforts to develop linking mechanisms will be successful, but their importance to effective public land management warrants that these efforts receive close attention in the agencies and the Congress.

The Bureau and the Service, with certain important exceptions, have the tools necessary to effectively regulate public land users and maintain facilities--policies, procedures, and authority. Their regulatory and maintenance programs, however, have been ineffective because they have not been supported with sufficient staff and funds.

Unless Bureau and Service ability to regulate users and maintain facilities is strengthened significantly, damage and misuse of public lands and resources will undoubtedly continue, as will facility deterioration. If these trends persist, they may prevent future generations from enjoying many of the values and experiences which Bureau and Service lands now provide, and they may needlessly prevent the agencies from achieving their assigned resource and environmental protection objectives. Strengthening the agencies' regulatory programs will require clearer citation authority for Bureau employees in the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. It should also include implementing our prior recommendations for reforming the 1872 Mining Law.

Overall, Bureau and Service efforts to effectively and efficiently manage their lands and resources in accordance with numerous legislative, judicial, and administrative mandates have been seriously impaired by limited and variable staff and funds available to them. This situation will probably continue until a proper balance is reached between the agencies' management responsibilities and the staff and funds they receive to carry them out. Failure to reach this balance may prevent the agencies from achieving the degree and quality of public land management the Congress has mandated and expects the agencies to deliver.

Our findings also reinforce our established position that personnel ceilings are an ineffective substitute for responsible management and should be abandoned. We recognize, however, that with recent legislative and Presidential directives supporting ceilings, they will not be abandoned in the foreseeable future.

The Office of Management and Budget maintains that its new system of workyear ceilings will alleviate management problems associated with current yearend ceilings and permit agencies to hire additional part-time permanent employees. It would be speculative for us to predict whether the new ceilings will resolve the management problems we found in the Bureau and the Service and permit the agencies to carry out their land management responsibilities effectively and efficiently. This can be determined best by the test of practical application and careful measuring of resultant improvements--a task which we believe could best be performed by the agencies.

A needless burden on Service staff and funds is the continued administration of small and scattered tracts for which it has little or no use. It would be far more practical, economical, and sensible to sell or give them away to adjacent landowners who could put them to better use. To do so, however, the Service must have the necessary legal authority.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CONGRESS

1. The Congress should, in consultation with the Bureau, amend the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to require a long-range renewable resource program development process for the Bureau. The process need not be identical to that required of the Service by section 4 of the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act, as amended. It should, as a minimum however, meet the major objectives of the resources planning act and provide for long-term quantified production goals designed to meet the Bureau's share of the Nation's renewable resource needs.
2. The Congress should revise the 1872 Mining Law in accordance with recommendations made in our February 27, 1979, report "Mining Law Reform and Balanced Resource Management" (EMD-78-93). Among other things, the legislation should grant discretionary authority to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to either permit or prevent development of mineral deposits on public lands, establish the means for responsible and equitable use of this discretionary authority, and provide for Federal retention of title to the surface.
3. The Congress should consider modifying section 303 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to authorize Bureau of Land Management employees to ticket persons violating Federal resource protection laws, similar to the authority 16 U.S.C. 559 grants to Forest Service employees.
4. The Congress should review Bureau and Service staffing and funding levels in light of
 - overall budget constraints and personnel ceilings;
 - established resource production, protection, and conservation goals; and
 - other assigned responsibilities and specific tasks.

Based on this review the Congress should provide for a more realistic balance between the agencies' responsibilities and capabilities by either reducing responsibilities or by providing sufficient funds to effectively carry out assigned responsibilities.

5. The Congress should enact legislation authorizing the Service to sell or, in some instances, give away small, scattered land holdings which are too costly or impractical to administer properly.

We will assist the committees in preparing these revisions if requested.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SECRETARIES OF
THE INTERIOR AND AGRICULTURE

1. The Secretary of Agriculture should direct the Forest Service to place greater emphasis on conflicts, interactions, and trade-offs among potential resource uses in future assessment and program updates. (See section II.)
2. The Secretaries should direct the Service and the Bureau to set yearly production goals during the annual program and budget process which reflect changes in production capabilities as they occur. (See section II.)
3. The Secretary of the Interior should direct the Bureau to adopt a policy for all resources similar to its policy on timber of guaranteeing access to potential developers by obtaining easements and rights-of-way. (See section II.)
4. The Secretaries should direct the Service and the Bureau to
 - develop staffing and funding needs necessary to regulate users of public lands and maintain facilities and resources and
 - present the needs to the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior for review and approval. (See section IV.)
5. The Secretaries should
 - direct the Bureau and the Service to carefully monitor and evaluate management improvements which result from new workyear personnel ceilings after they have been in effect for a reasonable period and
 - aggressively seek higher ceilings from OMB if, in their judgments, the new ceilings fail to provide the Bureau and the Service sufficient staff to adequately carryout their assigned land management responsibilities. (See section V.)

IX. AGENCY COMMENTS AND OUR EVALUATION

We obtained official comments on the draft of the full report from the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service and Office of Inspector General; the Department of the Interior; and the Office of Management and Budget. The agencies agreed with most of our recommendations or the objectives underlying them. Both Departments cited relevant actions they have completed, begun, or planned. The agencies, however, disagreed with, or misinterpreted, certain recommendations, conclusions, and factual information in the draft report.

The agencies' complete comments are in appendixes in the full report. We addressed each point, and our responses are noted immediately following each agency point in the appendixes of the full report. The agencies' principal comments, particularly those relating to our conclusions and recommendations, are highlighted below.

Comments on our congressional recommendations

The Forest Service endorsed our recommendation regarding a long-range renewable resource program for the Bureau and agreed that additional legislation is necessary. Interior, however, expressed reservations about certain specific features of the Service's process and stressed the need for flexibility to decide the specific process that would be most appropriate for the Bureau. Interior opposed extending the identical legal requirements to the Bureau, but said the Bureau would assess the Service's procedures in developing its own process in response to recent Presidential directives.

We believe that the basic objective of the Service's 1974 resources planning act, as amended--ensuring that future needs are met to the extent possible--is crucial and requires realistic, long-range, quantified resource production goals. Further, we believe long-range programs should provide the Congress with a credible basis for (1) determining future funding needs, (2) assessing costs, benefits, and impacts of various management levels, (3) evaluating annual budget requests, and (4) evaluating agency management effectiveness. While we do not object to tailoring the Service's process to the Bureau's needs, we believe the Bureau's process should be authorized by the Congress and set forth in legislation to ensure that it satisfies these important objectives. Accordingly, we modified our recommendation to allow the Bureau

flexibility, while providing for appropriate congressional review and authorization.

None of the agencies commented directly on our recommendation to revise the 1872 Mining Law.

The Department of the Interior said amending section 303 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act to improve the Bureau's law enforcement capability is a current legislative priority.

The Forest Service agreed with our recommendation on balancing the agencies' responsibilities and capabilities and suggested that the Congress will have the opportunity to do so when it receives the Service's updated renewable resource assessment and program. Interior said that this has been a central concern of the Bureau and that the Bureau's Four Year Authorization Request and Report for fiscal years 1982-1985 (due in May 1980) should contribute to congressional understanding of future staff and fund requirements. We agree with both agencies but stress that the Bureau's 4-year authorization should not be considered as an acceptable substitute for the long-range program we recommend.

The Office of Management and Budget, however, questioned the support for our conclusion on the agencies' staffing and funding levels, claiming it was based on complaints from agency field personnel rather than on systematic analysis. OMB suggested that these complaints may be symptomatic of managerial problems, bureaucratic desire for more, or something else, but that the agencies could correct them managerially within present staffing and funding levels.

We independently developed the case examples in the full report and believe they adequately support our conclusions. We agree that better management may help, and we have made recommendations and endorsed agency actions now underway where appropriate. However, we believe the report clearly demonstrates a gap between the agencies' responsibilities and capabilities which is too large to be bridged by more efficient management alone. We disagree that more extensive and costly analysis is needed to further prove this point.

OMB also stated that the annual appropriation process is the most definitive expression of congressional expectations, and thus disagreed that the agencies are having difficulty meeting those expectations. We maintain that the agencies' authorizing acts are the most accurate expressions of the degree and quality of public land management the Congress expects. At the same time, we recognize that this level of management may not be possible because of

fiscal constraints and higher national priorities. If the Nation cannot afford what is now required, we believe the Congress needs to decide what requirements are least important and delete them. Otherwise, they tend to drain funds from, and dilute the effectiveness of, more important management efforts.

We agree with OMB that achieving a better knowledge of costs, benefits, and priorities of alternative management actions is necessary. This is why we endorse better resource assessments, long-range programs, land management plans and inventory data, and stronger links between them and the agencies' annual budgets. With these improvements, we believe the Congress will have a more credible basis for deciding the level of management we can afford and what, if any, requirements should be deleted because of monetary constraints.

The Forest Service agreed with our recommendation for legislative authority to sell or, in some instances, give away small, scattered land holdings. It added that the proposed Small Tracts Act (H.R. 6257), if enacted, would provide sufficient authority. We added this information to our report.

Comments on our secretarial recommendations

The Forest Service brought to our attention a number of actions it had taken regarding production goals for the non-Federal sector and encouraging that sector's adherence to the 1974 resources planning act, as amended. After considering this information (which was not brought to our attention during the review), we deleted criticisms and proposals in this regard.

The Service had no objection to our recommendation to place greater emphasis on conflicts, interactions, and trade-offs among potential resource uses in future assessment and program updates. Due to a misinterpretation, however, both the Service and Interior questioned our recommendation regarding adjustment of production goals.

We did not intend to imply that long-term goals should be adjusted each year. Rather, we intended that the agencies should set yearly goals which reflect changes in production capabilities due to events that occur between the time long-term goals are established and normally revised. We have clarified the recommendation accordingly.

The Service agreed that continued high timber harvest levels could damage other resources if adjustments are not made, but disagreed that unacceptable damages have occurred because of failure to adjust for the production-limiting events we cited. A careful reading would show that the only case of actual damages we cited was that related to wilderness study (RARE) limitations. Although we did not characterize them as such, we believe these damages were unacceptable in that the Service could have avoided them by adjusting annual harvest levels. While we cited other production-limiting events, we did not say they actually had resulted in damages.

The Department of the Interior agreed with our recommendation on Bureau access policy and noted it was supported by a draft Bureau study report on access to coal leases. It said the Bureau is in the process of updating its access policy in line with our recommendation but cautioned that providing proper access will require substantial funding and personnel increases.

Interior also concurred with our recommendation to develop staffing and funding needs for user regulation and maintenance programs. It said the Bureau will study visitor regulation needs during fiscal year 1981 and that an evaluation of the Bureau's maintenance program is now underway. The Forest Service, however, said it presents needs for these programs each year and that they were fully discussed in the recent renewable resource program update.

We believe our report clearly shows that the routine budget process has not yet resulted in sufficient support for these programs. With the improvements we recommend, the Service in time should have better justified budgets. However, given the immediate needs of these programs and the added costs of further deferring needed maintenance, we believe special efforts to bolster these programs are necessary--efforts such as those the Bureau plans.

Interior and the Forest Service agreed with our recommendations regarding new workyear personnel ceilings, and both expect to give them a thorough test. OMB stood by its previous positions, which are discussed in this summary (see p. 20). OMB added, however, that personnel controls will be used as long as there are concerns about the size of the Federal establishment--a reality we also recognize in our report.

We believe past experience has proven that end-of-year ceilings did not effectively limit the size of the Federal work force and that they fostered other problems. We hope the workyear ceilings are better, but that remains to be seen. In any event, we also are concerned about the size of the Federal work force, but we believe controls now possible through the budget process and responsible management by the agencies are better means of control than artificial ceilings.

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